

The Spiritual Merchant described,
AND
The Gain of true Godliness proved.

A
S E R M O N

PREACHED AT THE
T A B E R N A C L E,
NEAR
MOORFIELDS, LONDON;

On *Wednesday, October 29, 1777.*

By S A M U E L M E D L E Y. K

Published at the Request of many who heard it.

"The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a MERCHANT, *Matt. xiii. 45.*
"But Godliness with Contentment is GREAT GAIN," *1 Tim. vi. 6.*

L O N D O N :

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The Special Meeting of the
AND
The City of London

S E R M O N

PREACHED AT THE
T A B E R N A C L E

M O O R F I E L D S L O N D O N



By S A M U E L M E D L E Y

44

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PROVERBS, Chap. III. Ver. 14.

For the merchandize of it is better than the merchandize of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold.

IF they are greatly and fatally mistaken who, as the apostle says, "suppose that gain is godliness:" They, on the other hand, are not less so, who imagine that there is no *gain in godliness*: for, the same apostle tells us, that "godliness with contentment is great gain, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." In what a striking, beautiful, easy, and familiar manner is this truth set before us in the words of the text! If there were not another in the bible, *this alone* is sufficient to prove, *that real religion and true godliness, ought to be, and are, the principal concern of the heart, the constant and daily pursuit of the life and practice of the real Christian.* Indeed the words themselves without any exposition, naturally and plainly afford and inculcate this truth: when I look around me and consider the diligence, care, and attention of men who are engaged in the various

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branches

branches of mercantile life, to the important and necessary duties of their station, in order to make their trade, interest, and fortune secure, I am led to a painful reflection on the awful contrast which appears in comparing their conduct with that of many gospel professors in our day—of many of whom, I fear it may with truth be said, that they are by no means properly concerned to make their calling and election sure. Do not many such, trade for this world, as if there were no hereafter? Will such persons permit me seriously and solemnly to address them from the words of the text? O that they may be owned and blessed of God to their eternal benefit, in awakening them out of a state of carnal security and false peace, and in bringing them to a knowledge and pursuit after this heavenly merchandize. May the true believer, the *heavenly merchant*, have his heart comforted, his hands strengthened, and be enabled with renewed vigor and delight to pursue his *holy*, heavenly trade and calling—Happily knowing, as the text says, that “the merchandize of it is better than the merchandize of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold.” It seems sufficient to observe respecting the connection of these words that they are spoken of *that wisdom* which the apostle *James* says “comes from above,” &c. &c.—By which is meant either *the LORD JESUS CHRIST himself*, who is made unto all his people *wisdom*, or the work of the LORD the Spirit

rit on their souls, making them wise unto salvation through faith. Now the words of the text are allegorical, and the allegory though natural and easy is not less striking and beautiful, than it is important and instructive.

In speaking, therefore, upon the subject thus briefly introduced to you, I purpose, with the Lord's assistance to consider :

I. The real Christian under the character of a *merchant*, and shew how he answers to that character.

II. The *articles* of his trade, or what he deals in.

III. The *stock* he trades with.

IV. The *port* he trades to.

V. The *trials, difficulties* and *losses* he is liable to in his trade.

VI. The *manner* in which his trade is carried on.

VII. What are the *profits* and *gains* of his trade, and prove (as the text says) that the "merchandize of it is better than the merchandize of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold."

LASTLY, I shall conclude, with an address to the real Christian under the character of a merchant, and also to the Christless sinner, who is both a stranger and an enemy to this heavenly calling and merchandize.

I. Consider the *real Christian* under the character of a *merchant* and shew how he answers to that character.

And we need not hesitate a moment to fix this character upon him, inasmuch as our blessed Lord himself hath done it, for he speaks of and describes the real Christian by it. *Matt. xiii. 45.* "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant-man seeking goodly pearls." And an evident allusion to this character, seems plainly to be had in the following passages of scripture, *Prov. xxxi. 14.* where speaking of a godly woman, Solomon says, she is like the "merchant-ships, she bringeth her goods from far," also *Solomon's Song iii. 6.* "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness—perfumed—with all powders of the merchant," which seems evidently spoken as descriptive of the church of Christ. But I now proceed to shew how the real Christian in his *spiritual* character and conduct answers to this description. It may be pointed out, and, I think, proved in the following particulars, *viz.*

1. A merchant is, and necessarily must be a *living man*: it is impossible that any other can be a merchant. Now this is not more true in natural things than it is in spiritual. None but spiritually living or truly regenerate persons are or can be spiritual merchants. If they are not such, they have no knowledge of, nor any benefit from the merchandize spoken of in the text. No more can be done by a spiritually dead soul in the merchandize of heaven, than by a dead corps in any merchandize on earth. If men were to find on the exchange, in the custom-house, on the wharfs,

or

or in the compting-house, a number of dead corps, do you think they would esteem them merchants? Would they not say, none but living persons can be employed here, either in a way of getting good for themselves, or doing good to others. So true is it spiritually, "except a man be born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." None but spiritually living souls are or can be spiritual merchants.

2. A merchant must be a *diligent man*. Drowsiness and slothfulness will cover a man with rags. As it is naturally so it is spiritually, he who would thrive must be diligent, hence God's people are exhorted to "give diligence to make their calling and election sure." And, "not to be slothful in Business, but fervent in spirit serving the Lord." And again to be "always abounding in the work of the Lord"—And as Solomon says, "the hand of the diligent maketh rich," compare this with these passages, *Heb. vi. 11.* "And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end." *2 Pet. i. 5.* "And besides this giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue. and to your virtue knowledge," &c.—a thriving spiritual merchant must be a *diligent man*.

3. A merchant must be a *man of punctuality and dispatch*; if either of these are neglected his character, his credit, and his trade also, will be greatly injured. There is no earthly merchant

in the world but will own this ; and be assured it is not less true in spirituals. If *punctuality* and *dispatch* are not used by the people of God in their duty, and walk with God, their souls will be much injured, therefore to this the saints are exhorted in the word of God, *Eccl. ix. 10.* “ What thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy “ might, for there is no work, nor knowledge, nor “ device, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou “ goest.” If you are a heavenly merchant, let nothing which it is in your power to prevent, hinder, or even interrupt the regular, constant stated duties of your walk with God—and I will venture to say without fear of being mistaken, you will surely find your comfort maintained, and your spiritual profit increased by it.

4. A merchant must be *constant and regular in his correspondence* ; if this is neglected all will go wrong, and his affairs will be thrown into perplexity and confusion ; nor less so will it be with thy soul believer if thou art not constant and regular in thy correspondence with heaven by prayer : neglect of prayer will be the bane of thy peace and comfort. Hence you are exhorted in scripture, “ always to pray and not to faint—To be “ instant in prayer—and to pray without ceasing.” —As you value your comfort or profit, do attend to this ; be *constant and regular in your correspondence with heaven by prayer.*

5. A merchant must *know and be attentive to the state of his affairs*. And this is best come at by frequent examination, posting, and ballancing his books. If this be neglected he will never know how matters stand with him. So believe it is of equal moment and importance for thee to know and be attentive to the state of the affairs of thy soul, by frequent and serious reading and searching of the word of God, and then examining and comparing thy heart and life with it, and herein thou wilt find thy judgment established, thy conscience pacified, and thy heart sweetly comforted.

6. A merchant is a man of a *truly honourable and respectable calling*. It was said of the merchants of Tyre of old, what is true of many in *Great Britain*—"That her merchants were princes, "and her traffickers the honorable of the earth." Thus they ever have been, and justly are, looked upon as men of a truly honorable and respectable calling in the world. Nor are the saints of God, less so in their spiritual calling, however they may be despised and contemned. A saint of God is a truly honorable character, as the psalmist says, "this honor have all the saints," their connections and business are truly honorable, and their end will be everlasting honor and blessedness.

7. A merchant is a man of a very *useful* calling, not only to himself but to others also, they are the support of a nation, and exceeding useful to society, in the many and various parts of their

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employments.

employments. Indeed it may be said, what should or could we in this land do without them ! It must be granted that our merchants are men of great usefulness. Nor in any sense is the spiritual merchant, the true believer in Christ, a less useful person. He is a blessing, a special and spiritual one to all around him, to the church, the world and himself—Believers are called in scripture the “ salt of the earth,” no doubt to intimate their great usefulness, nor are they less so as spiritual merchants. The world stands for the church’s sake, and when the trade of all God’s spiritual merchants is ended, this world will soon, very soon be burnt up. Little do the carnal men think how much they are indebted to the saints and people of God upon earth.

8. A merchant is a man of a *profitable* calling ; he has something in view in undertaking and prosecuting the various duties of it : and many find very great advantages arising from it. But here it must be observed, that this is by no means the case with all earthly merchants ; some of them it must be granted trade much but gain little or nothing. Nay not only so, but they find sometimes that they are engaged in a very unprofitable trade, and really suffer very great losses ; however this not only may be, but is the case oftentimes with earthly merchants, yet it is by no means so with the spiritual merchant. Let who will suffer, loose, break, or be ruined, he is sure to gain. And *gain greatly*, for saith the apostle,

apostle, " Godliness with contentment is great gain," thus it is with respect to the comfort and pleasure which the soul enjoys from it, even here on earth, and thus it will be hereafter. For then the believer will be put into the certain and happy possession of eternal life and glory. *Great gain*, this indeed ! Thus you see a spiritual merchant is a man of a truly profitable calling. But I shall have occasion hereafter to speak more particularly of his gains.

9. A merchant must prepare for and expect to meet with *many trials, difficulties*, and some *losses*, notwithstanding his trade may be good and lawful, his conduct honest and upright, and his gain, in general, great. Something of this sort must the spiritual merchant prepare for and expect. But as I shall have occasion to speak more particularly upon these things hereafter : I forbear to enlarge at present, and pass on to the second thing proposed, *viz.*

II. To consider the *articles* of his trade, or what he deals in.

Here let it be observed that he trades not in toys, trifles, or vanities ; much less in falsehood, deceit, and lies. But he trades in the most rich, valuable, glorious, and everlasting realities. Some of which as mentioned in the word of God, I shall briefly speak of.

1. He trades in *gold*, by which we may understand the love and grace of God ; thus *Rev.*

iii. 18. "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried
 "in the fire, that thou mayest be rich." He is
 doubtless a thriving and prosperous spiritual mer-
 chant who deals much in *this gold*, for it does
 and will make him rich towards God, and rich
 to all eternity. By gold also we may understand
 the scriptures, or word of God which are fre-
 quently compared to gold, and true, bright,
 precious, pure unmixed gold they are. *Psal.*
 xix. 10. This is gold which can never be
 diminished in its weight, or reduced in its
 value, nor ever will it be called in to have its
 standard altered, or be new coined, which is
 often a loss to earthly merchants. This is gold
 of which he cannot be too covetous, nor can
 he have too much, O let spiritual merchants
 think of this, and pursue this branch of their hea-
 venly trade with the greatest eagerness, diligence,
 and care.

2. He trades in *jewels and pearls*; by which I
 understand the LORD JESUS CHRIST himself,
 and all his gracious and glorious blessings and
 benefits. For he it is who is emphatically
 called the "Pearl of great price," to which
 he himself plainly refers, in *Matt.* xiii. 45, 46.
 No man can possibly be a spiritual merchant who
 deals not in this article, of infinitely more worth
 and value than the jewels and pearls upon earth.
 The lustre of them can never decay, the worth
 of them can never decrease, Christ is not only
 a pearl but a collection of pearls; such are the
 graces

graces and glories that are in him. O let all spiritual merchants make much of this article of their trade, and pray and strive to enlarge and increase it every day; they cannot here over trade themselves, nor need they fear going too far.

3. He trades in *wine and oil*; by which may be understood the sweet and gracious influences and comfort of the HOLY GHOST. They may be compared to wine for their sweetness and refreshing nature, and to oil for the honor which they confer; and indeed in this very view they are frequently spoken of in the scriptures. So the psalmist expresses himself, *Psal. xxiii. 5.* "Thou anointest my head with oil," &c. *Prov. xxi. 20.* "There is treasure to be desired and oil in the dwelling of the wise." Also *Jer. xxxi. 12.* "Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord, for wheat and for wine and for oil, &c. God promises in his word "to give his people the oil of joy for mourning," &c. So in the ixth of Proverbs, wisdom is said "to have mingled her wine." This is a very comfortable and pleasing, as well as profitable part of a spiritual merchant's trade. O it is well indeed when the soul is sweetly refreshed with the wine and oil of God's comforts, there are none like them.

4. He trades in *all pleasant fruits*, even those of the *tree of life*, which are said to be *twelve manner of fruits*; and by them may be intended,

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The sweet and soul refreshing blessings of the gospel of Christ. Spiritual merchants have often happy and blessed occasion to express themselves as the church of God did of old. "I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste." They are always in season, for the tree of life brings them forth constantly. By these pleasant fruits may also be understood, what the apostle to the Galatians calls the "fruits of the Spirit," *Gal. v. 22, 23.* "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." These fruits will never rot or decay, but last and endure for ever. Happy, happy those spiritual merchants, who deal much in and have very large stocks of them, they have their fruit unto holiness and their end everlasting life.

5. He trades in *fine linen and goodly apparel*, even the fine linen pure and white, which is called "the righteousness of the saints," *Rev. xix. 8.* of which also the evangelical prophet Isaiah so sweetly speaks, *Isa. lxi. 10.* "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God, for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, and covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with jewels." This is indeed a most blessed and glorious part of his trade. He deals in no patched garments, for if you will be pleased

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to admit of the expression, he is too *humbly proud* to wear any such *filthy rags*.

6. He trades in *arms and ammunition*, even the *whole armour of God*; nor can he possibly carry on his trade without these, he well knows that there is a necessity for his dealing in this armour, and that he is exhorted to take it unto him and gird it on him, for without it he cannot stand, as the apostle says, *Eph. vi. 11. &c.* Though he will not as some do in our day, or at least would do if they durst, furnish the king's enemies, even *rebels* with arms; (though this by the by) the spiritual merchant cannot do without his *sword, shield, helmet, breast-plate, &c. &c.* O let all such merchants, look well to this article of their trade, and see to it that their spiritual armour be in good order, bright and clean, and fit for immediate service when called for.

7. He trades in *all rich and precious spices*; by which I understand the duties, walk and practice of evangelical holiness, which are as the spices of Lebanon to truly gracious souls; yea the holiness of the gospel is more odoriferous and fragrant than all the spicy groves of Arabia. The gospel holiness of a real Christian leaves a sweet favor where ever he comes, and under this very idea the church is spoken of and described in *Solomon's Song* iii. 6. "Who is this that cometh out
" of the wilderness like pillars of smoke perfumed
" with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders
" of the merchant." So also *Solomon's Song* iv.

13, 14. where the church is said to produce
 “ Camphire with spikenard, and saffron, calamus
 “ and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense,
 “ myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices.” O
 that the favor and holiness of our lives and con-
 versations may prove to all around us, that we
 deal in rich and precious spices. The good Lord
 help us to increase in this, and in every other
 article of spiritual trade more and more, that we
 may be growing rich for a blessed eternity.

III. Consider the *stock* he trades with:

Here I must observe he does not trade with any
 stock of his own, for he has none, but he trades
 with the whole stock of another, *viz.* the LORD
 JESUS CHRIST, (that is) with *all his fulness and*
unsearchable riches, and though he trades, as he
 most certainly does, all upon credit, yet such a
 rich and inexhaustible fund has he, that he cannot
 break. He is not only set up in trade by another,
 but he is supplied out of, and carries on his trade
 by the riches and credit of another, as will appear
 from his trading

I. With the *love of Christ*, and this is both
eternal and unchangeable; this is indeed a most
 blessed and precious part of his stock, it is so
 great, mighty and wonderful, as to be beyond
 knowledge or comprehension, for the apostle
 speaking of it, *Eph.* iii. 19. says, that “ the love
 “ of Christ passes knowledge.” This is the life,
 comfort and joy of his soul, in his carrying on
 spiritual

spiritual trade. O how happy is he when made to see that he is interested in, and has a right and title to the love of Christ. Here, if I may so say, he lays out much, and receives much daily; and though he loves and delights in this part of his stock, yet he neither does nor dares abuse or trifle with it. He has great dependence upon, and also great expectations from it, nor shall he, nor can he, ever be mistaken, deceived, or disappointed. O believer trade much and constantly with this part of your stock, by faith, prayer, love, hope, dependence and expectation. You are indeed a rich spiritual merchant who have the *love of Christ* for your stock.

2. He trades with the *power of Christ*, and this is *omnipotent* and *invincible*, which made the apostle Paul, who traded much in it, *Phil. iv. 13.* say, "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." This power of Christ is made perfect in all his dear people's weakness, *2 Cor. xii. 9.* And of such necessity and importance is it to them, that "they can do nothing at all without it, *John xv. 5.*" for they "are not sufficient of themselves to think any thing as of themselves, but their sufficiency is of God, *2 Cor. 3, 5.*—In all their duties, trials, distresses and difficulties, they trade only with this power. And this they have always found sufficient to help, support and save them. O believer make large drafts upon this part of your stock every day; it is I fear a poor, dark and miserable day indeed

indeed with your soul, if you are not drawing upon and trading with the *power and strength* of Christ.

3. He trades with the *wisdom of Christ*, and this is *certain, unerring and infallible*. Hence the LORD JESUS CHRIST is said in scripture to be made unto his people *wisdom*, and he it is who does, and who only can, make them wise unto salvation, through faith in him. Neither natural wisdom, or what is in scripture called the *wisdom of the flesh*; nor the wisdom of this world, are sufficient for carrying on this trade. It must and only can be carried on by what the apostle *James* calls, “the *wisdom that is from above*,” and this the spiritual merchant, so apt is he in himself to err and mistake continually, feels his need of. Most happy is he to find that the wisdom of Christ is engaged for him, and that he has warrant and liberty to apply for, and to make use of it every day.— This makes him say, that he knows Jesus is *too wise to be mistaken, too good to be unkind*. And thus he daily trades with the wisdom of Christ.

4. He trades with the *truth and faithfulness of Christ*. This can never *change* or be in *any sense broken*. Nay so great is it, that God says, concerning this part of a believer's stock, *Isa. liv. 10*. “It is as the waters of Noah unto me, for as I
“have sworn that the waters of Noah should no
“more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I
“will no more be wroth with thee, nor rebuke
“thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the
“hills

“ hills be removed but my kindness shall not
 “ depart from thee neither shall the covenant of
 “ my peace be removed saith the Lord, that
 “ hath mercy upon thee.” This truth and faith-
 fulness of Christ stands engaged for him and there-
 fore he never can, or shall fail. He cannot pos-
 sibly depend too much upon it, nor expect too
 much from it, it has always been found *great*,
 and *sufficient* for all the people of God. O let
 every spiritual merchant rejoice and glory in this
 blessed part of his stock, and beg to be enabled
 more and more to trade with it.

5. He trades with the *merit and righteousness*
of Christ, and this is *infinite, inexhaustible, and*
invaluable. His very life, honor, and comfort
 lay in this, that he is warranted and enabled to
 say, “ Surely in the Lord have I righteousness
 “ and strength.” To this merit and righteousness
 of Christ as he carries on his holy, heavenly trade,
 he is happily obliged to make large and con-
 tinual applications, and well for him it is, that of
 God, Christ is made unto him *righteousness*, for
 if this part of his stock were not good and firm,
 all the rest would be of no value to him: If it
 were not *infinite* and *inexhaustible*, it would do
 him no good. It must be a merit and a righteou-
 sness infinite in its value and efficacy, and inex-
 haustible in its riches and fullness, that can suit or
 satisfy the heavenly merchant, and blessed be God
 such is this. O believer be diligent in your ap-
 plication to it; use it daily and be thankful for it.

6. He trades with the *offices and characters of Christ*, and these are various, sweet and suitable. He is a redeemer, brother, advocate, shepherd, friend, counsellor, prophet, priest, and king. And from hence arises much of his honor and happiness in this heavenly trade. Herein he sees all his interest and comfort laid up in good hands, he can and does trust his all with Jesus, and this insures his success—there is nothing which he cannot or would not put into his holy, wise, kind, blessed, and faithful hands.

7. He trades with the *glorious exaltation and intercession of Christ*, who is his head and representative above, who lives, who ever lives to make intercession for him, and because his Jesus lives he shall live also, here by grace, and eternally in glory. He knows that Jesus will never leave nor forsake him, or his best interests, and is happy that he has “an advocate with the Father Jesus Christ the righteous.” His Jesus is kindly, constantly, wisely, and faithfully, managing and carrying on all his concerns in heaven, and many precious and valuable remittances he makes to the believer while here below. A blessed stock indeed!

IV. Let us now consider the *port* he trades to.

Herein he essentially differs from all other merchants on earth, for while they trade to earth and upon earth he trades to *heaven*, the port and world of eternal glory. What the apostle says of
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the believers conversation is true of his trade; "It is in heaven," *Phil.* iii. 20. Now this heavenly and glorious port may be thus considered.

1. As a *distant port*, far beyond the sight, knowledge, and thought of carnal men. And in this sense it seems to be alluded to by the prophet, *Isa.* xxxiii. 17. "And thou shalt behold "the land that is very far off." But though a distant port, yet he is often near to it, and as it were, within sight of it, in the outgoings of his soul. Indeed the spiritual merchant is himself bound to it, and notwithstanding its distance, he most certainly and safely shall arrive at last: whilst on the voyage, he often receives very great, gracious and precious consignments from it of pardon, peace, comfort, joy, strength, and assurance, &c. &c. &c.

2. As a *rich port*, where there is every thing which he can stand in need of. To which the apostle alludes, when he says in the ivth chapter to the *Phil.* 19th verse, "But my God shall "supply all your need according to his riches in "glory by Christ Jesus." It is from this port that he receives out of the fullness and from the unsearchable riches of the Lord Jesus, and grace for grace. All his true riches and treasure are fetched from thence, and so great are the riches of it that they can never be exhausted. The riches of Golconda and the mines of Mexico and Peru, will and must one day fail. But the riches

of this port to which the spiritual merchant trades, never will, never can fail.

The port is as rich as ever, there is no coming empty away from it, notwithstanding all that has been drawn from it, there is no diminution of its riches. They are sure to get fortunes, yea eternal ones, who do through grace trade to this port; for it is said to and of all such spiritual merchants, they shall be "enriched in every thing," 1 Cor. i. 5. 2 Cor. ix. 11.

3. The port to which he trades is a *safe port*, where both his interest and his property are secure, nothing is or can be lost, embezzled, or taken away from him, such are the honor, truth and justice he is always sure to find, never was there, or can there be any deceit or fraud, the spiritual merchant not only *may*, but *does* also venture his all here, he need not fear overtrading himself at this port, or that what he ventures is or can be unsafe; or that needful, suitable, just, and equitable returns shall not be made him, for it is said, Prov. xxix. 25. "Whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe." But O, how extensive this safety! such are safe for time, and safe for eternity, all is as safely secured, as it is kindly, and wisely ordered for the people of God. O that the consideration of the *safety* of our concerns with a gracious, faithful, and covenant-keeping God, may be a means of our being daily more and more concerned for the increase and enlargement of our spiritual trade and merchandize.

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4. The port he trades to is a *free port*, there are no taxes, no fines, no port charges, no customs to be paid, in order to carry on this heavenly trade, all is open and free, nay, there is no trade so much so, it is free for all who are made willing to engage in it; in the receiving and enjoying the benefits and profits of it they cannot make more free than welcome, there is never any embargo laid on, there is no shutting of the port, but the trade is always open and always free to every nation, kindred, tongue and people under heaven. O comforting consideration this! that it is a free port, all that trade to it are freely loved, freely justified, freely sanctified, freely supplied, and shall be freely and everlastingly saved. O that we may be by grace more free, and more diligent in our trading to this free port.

5. The port he trades to is a *royal port*, and the residence of king Jesus, all the blessings and privileges of it are truly royal, this spiritual trade is carried on with the king himself. From this king what thousands of royal favors and blessings are conferred and bestowed upon the children of God? They are all spiritual merchants and trade to this truly royal port, and are known, beloved, blessed, preserved, and honored by the king himself, they are all nearly related to, peculiarly interested in this king, they are honored with the company of the king, and enjoy holy fellowship and freedom with him. They receive all their

instruction, skill and success in their heavenly trade from the king, for he it is who guides, guards, blesses and saves them. And who will at last receive them to himself, and *their eyes shall see the king in his eternal glory and beauty*, and be for ever with him, near him, and like unto him.

6. The port he trades to is a *heavenly port*, where contrary to the custom of most merchants on earth, he will (when his trade is ended) go and settle and dwell for ever. For the end, the happy blissful end of all his trade, will come to this, viz. “ So shall we be for ever with the “ Lord.” In short this is what he has in view in the whole of his spiritual merchandize, viz. To gain the haven, the blissful wished for haven, of perfect felicity and everlasting repose. Or as the late pious Mr. *Fanch* beautifully expresses it,

“ *Now safe arrives the heavenly mariner ;*
 “ *The battering storm, the hurricane of life,*
 “ *All dies away in one eternal calm :*
 “ *With joy divine, full glowing in his breast,*
 “ *He gains the port of everlasting rest.”*

V. I am to shew what trials, difficulties, and losses he is liable to in his trade.

Here I would observe, that he is not liable to a *bankruptcy, misery, and ruin*, which are so much dreaded, and the very thought of which often makes so many earthly merchants tremble ; yet, notwithstanding this, the spiritual merchant has
 his

his *trials*, *difficulties*, and *losses*, a few particular instances of which I shall just mention.

1. He meets with trials and difficulties from *storms* and *tempests*, such are all seasons of *affliction*, *temptation*, *persecution* and *outward distress*, which assail him while here below, and these storms and tempests are sometimes very long, and very violent, yet shall he through mighty and glorious grace bear up under, and weather them all. And though these in themselves are trials indeed, yet shall they all work together for good, yea for the best to the spiritual merchant. We often read in scripture of the people of God being in these storms and tempests, and we always also read of their being by a gracious, faithful and covenant-keeping God, brought safely and well through them all; for thus it is written, “many
“ are the afflictions of the righteous, but the
“ Lord delivereth him out of them all,” and again it is said of them when arrived safe in port,
“ these are they which came out of great tri-
“ bulation.”

2. He is liable to trials and sometimes to great losses from *bad servants*. Earthly merchants often suffer much from this quarter, so the spiritual merchant has at least two, very bad and very wicked servants, from whom he often suffers in the best things, they are a *sinful body*, and a *wicked heart*, the *sloth* of the one and the *pride* of the other is intolerable. And add to this, they are both of them as vile *dis-*

honest as they are abominably *proud* and *slotful*, so that the spiritual merchant is sure to suffer from them, and to be sensibly injured by them in his peace, duty, and comfort, and bad as this is, there is a worse circumstance attends, and that is, that he cannot get rid of or discharge these *bad servants*: add to this they claim a very near relation to him, though servants, so that he cannot turn them out as he would; and what is worse than all the rest, these bad servants often play a wicked part, and act the master or rather the tyrant over him, get for a season the better of him, overcome, insult, and abuse him to his face. O how much have many truly spiritual merchants suffered from these two bad servants, a *sinful body* and a *wicked heart*; read Paul's experience in the seventh chapter to the Romans, respecting what he felt and suffered from these two bad servants, and then seriously ask your own soul, if you do not find something like it. Indeed if you are a spiritual merchant you need to look well about you considering to what you are exposed, and are daily liable to suffer from two such bad servants as these.

3. He is liable to great losses from *thieves and robbers*; and they are principally these two; viz. 1st. a present evil world, and 2dly. by satan. And O how often do they rob and have they robbed poor believer, the spiritual merchant, of his peace and comfort; they are ever watching their opportunity to be either slyly pilfering, or downright

right plundering him. David in the *cxix Psalm* knew something of this, for he says in the 61st verse, "The bands of the wicked have robbed me," see *Dan. xi. 14*. He who has never *sensibly* suffered from these thieves and robbers it is to be feared knows little or nothing of being a truly spiritual merchant. If the world and Satan never rob thee, to thy sorrow, shame, and grief, before the Lord, it is justly to be feared it is because they think thou hast nothing to be robbed of, but thy precious soul and that they have in possession already. Well, let the spiritual merchant watch and pray. And he may rejoice that though they are permitted to *rob* him they shall not *destroy* him. O blessed be God for this!

4. He is liable to sad impositions and often to very considerable injury from *false and pretended merchants*, that is, from the many formal and hypocritical professors who sometimes even swarm around him. Hypocrites often wound sincere souls to the very heart, and the more so, if such truly gracious persons have had any former confidence in and connection with them, hoping and believing they had been real subjects of the grace of God. When such characters are detected and discovered it is hardly possible but that some of God's real saints will find themselves to have been imposed upon and deceived by them; real spiritual merchants in our day had need to be much upon their guard in this respect, and especially young ones, as they are mostly liable

able

able to fall a prey to, and be deceived and imposed upon by such *false and pretended* merchants. Judas and Simon Magus seem to have been such.

5. He is liable to injury and damage from *wars and piracies*, that is, from the contentions and sad sinful strife, which is but too, too often to be found among God's professing people. And these things have often been the occasion of much sorrow and disquiet to his soul, sad it is to say but most true, that in this respect it has often come to pass that spiritual merchants have robbed one another; or if you will admit the expression, they have in these sad instances been *privateering* one against the other. All God's own people who get engaged in carnal strife and contention are sure to be sufferers. The spiritual merchants of the church of Christ at *Corinth* were great sufferers in this respect, as appears from the apostle's reprovng them in the third chapter of his first epistle. It is a great mercy in carrying on our spiritual trade to be enabled to avoid and steer clear of such enemies as these. But, alas! they are so numerous that very few indeed, if any, totally escape them.

6. He sometimes suffers a good deal (but in the end he shall be no looser) from *calumny and falsehood*, earthly merchants sometimes suffer from these, by wicked men who attempt to hurt their credit by blackening their character, and so, if possible, put a stop to business. Such enemies the spiritual merchants meet with. Violent, cruel,

cruel, and merciless persecutors, will say all manner of evil of them falsely, for the name and sake of their dear and adorable Lord Jesus. Yea some have lost all they have had in the world, and life itself also; yet in the end have happily experienced that they have been no real losers but gainers, for their dear Lord has blessed all who are persecuted for righteousness sake; for he has said theirs is the kingdom of heaven, and if so, it must and shall be well with them at last.

VI. Consider, the *manner* in which his trade is carried on.

Here I would observe respecting the *manner*, that it is carried on I. By *Books*. II. By *Letters*. III. By *Good Bills*. IV. By *Running Cash*.

I. By *Books*.

1. The *Bible*. There is no doing without *this book*, for it contains the whole art, mystery and rules of his heavenly trade. His instruction, encouragement and comfort, in going on in it is all derived from hence. Of such usefulness and importance is it to all true spiritual merchants that it informs them, "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." Yea this book of books is "able to make them wise unto salvation through faith." And without attending

tending to it and consulting it, no profitable trade can possibly be carried on.

2. His *memory* which is his *day book*, a truly sanctified and a naturally retentive memory is to a spiritual merchant a very valuable blessing, and considered as one of his books it is a very useful one indeed to him; not a day passes but he finds he has need to make use of it, either to refer to transactions past or to record something new. The apostle Paul in his epistle frequently reminds the people of God of the usefulness and importance of this book, 1 Cor. xv. 2. 1 Cor. iv. 17. 1 Tim. iv. 6. and 2 Pet. i. 12, 13, 15. There are many daily occurrences both in respect of providence and grace which are, or ought to be plainly, faithfully, and carefully recorded there. But though the necessity and benefit of this book is so great, yet alas! how often are our poor memories like an *ill-kept* or at least like an *over crowded* day book, blurred and blotted! How many things are found therein that have no business there, and which indeed often do real hurt, while scarce room is to be found for the things of the greatest importance to this heavenly trade, this often fills us with confusion. O Lord grant grace that this book may be better kept!

3. His *judgment* which is his *journal*, herein the articles and circumstances of his trade are or should be more distinctly and particularly entered than in his day book. A sanctified *judgment* is a happy, useful, and comfortable *journal* to a
sanctified

sanctified *memory*. Memory without judgment is only confusion, judgment without memory is a contradiction, we shall find this book frequently spoken of and referred to in scripture, as of very great importance and use to the dear children of God, see *Psal.* cxix. 66. *Prov.* xiii. 23. *1 Cor.* i. 10. *Phil.* i. 9. If the book of a sound sanctified judgment is neglected by thee, as it is by many professors in this day, depend upon it your spiritual concerns will unavoidably be in a state of confusion. If thy judgment is not established, and in some happy manner scripturally regulated, both thy conscience and thy conduct also will betray thee. O it is a good thing that the heart and judgment be established with grace; there is as much connection between a believer's judgment and his conscience, as between a merchant's journal and his ledger. O think of this I pray you.

4. His *affections* which are his *cash book*, and here he has the joy and pleasure of looking over his spiritual stock, his incomes, his returns, his profits, and he happily finds that he has much in hand but more in hope; and that herein he shall not be disappointed or deceived; the apostle Paul seems to allude plainly and immediately to this, when he says, *Col.* iii. 2. "Set your affections on things above, not on things on earth." This is also I apprehend much of what the apostle means in the eighth chapter of the Romans where he says, "to be spiritually minded is life
" and

“and peace,” and our dear Lord himself seems to me plainly and undeniably to refer to this when he says, “Where your treasure is there will your heart (or affections) be *also*.” Happy and comfortable indeed when the affections are thus spiritually affected and employed. We need not be afraid of loving, valuing or prizing our heavenly riches and profits too much. O may our souls in this manner be more and more daily and delightfully employed.

5. His *conscience* which is his *ledger*, where his spiritual accounts are settled, and how the matter stands between God and his soul, clearly and fairly drawn out, and posted ready for a *final* and a *closing ballance*. It would be happy and well indeed for God’s people to keep their conscience as careful honest merchants do their ledgers, clean and free from errors and mistakes. A pacified, purified, well kept conscience must needs be a good conscience. A neglected ledger argues a dangerous situation of outward circumstances, and a neglected conscience argues and proves too, a very dismal, dangerous situation of soul. It is said of unregenerate men, *Titus* i. 15. “That their mind and conscience is defiled,” and in another place that “their conscience is seared with a hot iron.” The apostle Paul who was truly a spiritual merchant knew what such ledger was, and through grace he was enabled to keep it well towards God and man also. *Rom.* ix. 1. “My conscience also bearing
“ me

“ me witness in the Holy Ghost.” And in *Acts* xxiv. 16. he says, “ and herein do I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men.” And in *2 Cor.* i. 12. there is a sweet proof how well his conscience was kept, for he says of himself and other ministers of Christ that “ their rejoicing was this, the testimony of their conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God they had had their conversation in the world in general and towards them in particular.” When a merchant’s outward affairs are in a flourishing condition he loves to look into and examine his ledger, and so when the souls of God’s people are in a spiritually flourishing condition, they love to look into and examine their consciences, and find pleasure and comfort in so doing. Oh! of how much importance will this be at the final close and balance before the bar of God. May the good Lord in infinite mercy grant that we may each know what this book is, and that it is well kept; there cannot possibly be any spiritual thriving without it.

II. By Letters.

For there is no carrying on this heavenly trade without, the necessity and usefulness of them in worldly business needs no proof, they are not less needful or useful in spiritual business. But what are these *letters* say you? I answer *prayer*; and
professor

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professor, if thy soul is in a thriving, flourishing condition thou wilt find much happy and comfortable experience to consist in this. A merchant cannot be without correspondents. If he has not any correspondence he has not any trade, so a christian cannot trade without prayer. If you are truly a spiritual merchant you are *honored* and *privileged* with this happy correspondence. God often hears from you by prayer, and you also hear from him in the methods of his providence, and in the sweet, rich, and comfortable supplies of his grace. O what a sweet and blessed correspondence is this! may the Lord keep it up in our souls. Sweetly sings Dr. Watts,

“ *Till thou hast brought me to thy home,*
 “ *Where doubts and fears can never come ;*
 “ *Thy comfort, let me often see,*
 “ *And often thou shalt hear from me.*

III. By Good Bills.

It is a great matter in this day for a merchant to hold good bills; by holding bad ones, many have broke and come to nothing. Now the *goods bills* by which the spiritual merchant carries on his holy and heavenly trade are the *promises of God*. And truly good ones they are, they are God's promissory notes to his dear children, and they are of infinite service to the spiritual merchant. Were it not for these *good bills*, and the faithful, and rich and free *bank* of the glorious undiminished

undiminished fullness of Christ, he must have been a bankrupt long ago: nay had it not been for these he had never been set up in this heavenly trade. O how much is it for the comfort and happiness of the dear children of God, to see and know that all these *good bills*, these exceeding great and precious promises of God, are *regularly drawn, plainly signed, divinely sealed, properly indorsed, will never be refused*, but always *duly honoured*. Abraham of old carried on much of his trade this way; for being strong in faith he “ staggered not at the promise of God through “ unbelief.” O that we were more like him! Lord increase our faith, that we may deal much in and with thy promises.

IV. By Running Cash.

By which I mean the present *sensible comforts* with which their God and heavenly Father is pleased to favour and indulge them. This depends altogether upon his holy, wise, sovereign and good pleasure, for he affords them what he sees and knows will be best for them. The spiritual merchant shall have a sufficient supply of running cash, or sensible comfort to support him and bear his expences, while here *below*, and more is not needful; but he shall be sure at last to possess, and through a blessed happy eternity to enjoy, all his stock of glory *above*. Here he shall find that as his day his strength shall be, that divine grace is and ever will be sufficient

for Him.—That all things shall work together for his good, that God will guide him by his counsel and afterwards receive him to glory, that his dear Jesus will never leave him nor forsake him. And from these and such like sweet and gracious words, he draws the *running cash* of his *sensible comforts* while here. O let us be thankful for every pound, for every penny, yea for every mite of this, for it most assuredly is much more than we deserve.

VII. I come now to shew what are the *profits* and *gains* of his *trade*, and prove (as the text says) that *the merchandize of it is better than the merchandize of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold.*

The profits of this heavenly trade and merchandize are truly great, nay it is not too much to say of them that they are *inconceivably* and therefore *inexpressibly* great; for “eye hath not
“seen nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the
“heart of man to conceive what God has *promised*
“to and *prepared* for all them that love him.” And indeed this holy and heavenly profit is more than hinted in several passages of the word of God, viz. *Job* xxviii. 15, 19. “It cannot be gotten
“for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for
“the price thereof, the topaz of Ethiopia shall
“not equal it, neither shall it be valued with
“pure gold.” *Prov.* viii. 11, 19. “For wisdom is better than rubies and all the things
“that may be desired are not to be compared
“with

“ with it. My fruit is better than gold, yea
 “ than much fine gold, and my revenue than
 “ choice silver.” Also *Prov.* xvi. 16. “ How
 “ much better is it to get wisdom than gold,
 “ and to get understanding rather to be chosen
 “ than silver.” But I proceed to consider the
 words of the text. And,

I. The merchandize of it is better than the
 merchandize of silver, which I think will appear
 in the following particulars, viz.

1. The merchandise of silver is *uncertain*, both
 in the merchandize itself, and in all the profits,
 pleasures, and enjoyments of it ; for how often
 are the words of Solomon verified in them,
 where he says, “ For riches do certainly make
 “ unto themselves wings and fly away as an eagle
 “ towards heaven.” Uncertain indeed ! but the
 heavenly merchandize is *sure*, and therefore *better*,
 sure as the *love, wisdom, power, truth* and
faithfulness of a covenant God can make it. Sure
 in the profits, the pleasures, and the eternal en-
 joyment of them in glory. Blessed trade indeed
 wherein the parties engaged are sure to be gain-
 ers, yea everlasting gainers, most true is that
 observation that has frequently been made, viz.
 That though many have lost *for Christ* none ever
 lost *by him* ; thus then the merchandize of it is
 better than the merchandize of silver. It is sure
 and certain,

2. The merchandize of silver is *unsatisfying*, thus says the word of God, *Ecclef. v. 10.* "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver, nor he that loveth abundance with increase," *this also is Vanity.* But the heavenly merchandize is *soul satisfying*, and is therefore *better* than the merchandize of silver. In the true spiritual merchant that word is fulfilled which says, *Psal. lxiii. 5.* "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips." And that passage also, *Jer. xxxi. 14.* "And my people shall be satisfied with my goodness saith the Lord." Solomon says, *Prov. xiv. 14.* "A good man shall be satisfied from himself." That is (as I apprehend) from the grace and love of God to, and in his soul; for by the good man, Solomon no doubt means the truly gracious man; and such can in no other sense be satisfied from themselves, but as in Christ, and as partakers of his unsearchable riches. Lord grant us to be the happy partakers of these soul-satisfying riches.

3. The merchandize of silver is *short* and will soon have an *end*. For thus God speaks to all poor worldings who are panting after the dust of the earth, and who are loading themselves with the thick clay thereof. *James iv. 13, 14.* Go to now, "Ye that say to-day or to morrow we will go into such a city and continue there a year, and buy and sell and get gain. Whereas ye
" know

“ know not what shall be on the morrow; for
 “ what is your life, it is even a vapour which
 “ appeareth a little while and then vanisheth
 “ away.” *Short indeed!* Thus the rich man in
 the parable was dreadfully alarmed with this
 awful and tremendous message, “ Thou fool,
 “ this night thy soul shall be required of thee.”
 O how short was his time! Ah, worldlings, you
 can have at least but a short, a very short time
 of it. But now the heavenly merchandize is as
long as eternity, the spiritual merchant trades for
 an eternity, and an eternity he shall have to en-
 joy the profits of his happy, blessed, and pros-
 perous trade. O then surely in this instance
 also the merchandize of it is better than the
 merchandize of silver.

4. The merchandize of silver is often really
hurtful to him who is possessed of it, the wise
 men seems plainly to advert to this where he
 says, *Eccles. v. 13.* “ There is a sore evil
 “ that I have seen under the sun, namely riches,
 “ kept for the owners thereof to their hurt.”

The riches and profits of this world often
 prove a great, dreadful, and destructive snare
 to many poor souls. Hear what Paul says,
1 Tim. vi. 9. “ But they that will be rich fall
 “ into temptation, and a snare, and into many
 “ foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men
 “ in destruction and perdition.” Can any thing
 be more hurtful than this! But now the heavenly
 merchandize is *beneficial*. And of this also So-

lomon informs us, *Prov. xxii. 4.* By humility and the fear of the Lord are *riches*, and *honour*, and *life*. Nay so very beneficial is this trade that our dear Lord has assured every spiritual merchant, that he shall "receive an hundred fold" in this life, and in the world to come life everlasting." Successful trade indeed! Good Lord grant, we were all truly and ready engaged and employed in it.

5. The merchandize of silver can afford no true *peace* and *comfort* at *death*, when death comes all is over with him who has only trade for this world; neither trade nor gains of this world can then give ease or relief. *What is the hope of the poor worldling when God taketh away his soul*, neither gold nor silver will stand in any stead, for as Solomon says, riches profit not in the day of wrath. So the *Psalmist*, *Psal. xlix. 16, 17.* "Be not thou afraid when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased. For when he dieth he shall carry nothing away, his glory shall not descend after him." Also *Eccl. v. 15.* "As he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labour which he may carry away in his hand." But the heavenly merchandize affords the greatest and sweetest *peace and comfort* at death, so as to cause the soul to triumph over death and all the gloomy horrors of the grave. Yea it is then they have often the sweetest

est moments on this side eternity, and can sing
with Dr. Watts,

Go now and boast of all your store,
And tell how bright you shine :
Your heaps of glitt'ring dust are yours,
And my Redeemer's mine;

And elsewhere,

Let others stretch their arms like seas,
And grasp in all the shore ;
Grant me the visits of thy face,
And I desire no more.

6. The merchandize of silver can never assure a man of *heaven and eternal glory*. What will a man be profited in the next, if he gain this whole world and lose his own soul, it may justly be said to such, *What will ye do in the day of visitation—To whom will ye seek for help, and where will you leave your glory?* But the heavenly merchandize is an assured earnest, and a sweet and blessed foretaste of glory. Yea to such it is said, *Rom. ii. 7.* “ But unto them who by patient continuance “ in well doing, seek for glory, and honour, and “ immortality, eternal life.” Surely then the *profits* of this spiritual merchandize appear to be better than the merchandize of silver.

II. And the gain thereof than fine gold.

The truth of which, I think, plainly and fully appears in the following particulars, viz.

1. By this his spiritual merchandize he gains *true peace in his conscience*, and surely this is better than fine gold, than *much* fine gold, yea than all the fine gold on the earth, for the finest of the fine gold on earth, never contained in it, and therefore never could convey any true peace to the conscience. But the peace which the spiritual merchant gains, is called emphatically *the peace of God*, yea, it is said to pass all understanding, and to keep the hearts and minds of the people of God, *Phil. iv. 7.* and the peace of God, &c. &c. The peace of conscience which he gains is also said to *rule in his heart*, and well it may, for it is a *heavenly, holy, solid, durable, and soul-saving peace*. Many an earthly merchant has gained much fine gold who never gained nor ever enjoyed one grain of true peace in his conscience; but on the contrary, with all his gains he found his own soul pierced through with many sorrows, the labour in getting, the care in keeping, and the fear of losing their fine gold, takes away all their peace, both by night and by day. How remarkably does Solomon prove the truth of what I am now saying, *Eccel. v. 12.* “The
 “abundance of the rich will not suffer him to
 “sleep.” I have read of a poor worldling who when he lay a dying called for a large bag of gold out of his chest, and laid it near his heart, hoping some comfort from it, finding it to be insufficient, he calls hastily for another, and a larger, which was brought; and when this was
 laid

laid by the other, he suddenly cried out and said, *Oh take it all away! take it all away! it will not do! it will not do!* The apostle Paul who was a true spiritual merchant happily experienced the truth and sweetness of this part of the gains of his trade, especially where he says, "For I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day." And elsewhere he says, "For I am now ready to be offered up and the time of my departure is at hand, I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them that love his appearing." O it is sweet living, and happy dying with this part of our spiritual gain comfortably experienced on the heart, such will joyfully and thankfully say, the gain thereof is better than fine gold.

2. He gains *true holiness of heart and life*, and this also is better than fine gold. For often it appears that those who have most fine gold have not only the least but indeed are totally destitute of true holiness of heart and life. But this spiritual merchant is one who is called and enabled to "serve the Lord in holiness and righteousness all the days of his life," *Luke i. 75.* "Yea he is one who is created in righteousness and true holiness by the work of God's holy Spirit
" upon

“ upon his soul,” *Eph.* iv. 24. He is one who is “ called unto holiness,” 1 *Thess.* iv. 7. He is also described as one who has “ fruit unto holiness.” *Rom.* vi. 22. And what is remarkable, he accumulates much of this blessed part of his gain in times of affliction, so says the apostle, *Heb.* xii. 10. “ But he for our profit that we might be “ partakers of his holiness.” Which he speaks of as the happy and blessed end of truly sanctified afflictions. This made a good minister say, that he learned more of God, Christ, Holiness, and Heaven in seven days affliction and illness than he had done in seven years preaching. O this is a blessed and precious part of his gain, which he shall enjoy in perfection to all eternity in glory.

3. He gains *true fellowship and communion with GOD*, and this is better than fine GOLD, for what the apostle John says, is verified in the experience of every spiritual merchant, 1 *John* i. 3. “ And truly our fellowship is with the Father, “ and with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.” Carnal men know nothing of this, nor does it make any part of their gains; all spiritual merchants are sons of God, and because they are so, the apostle says, *Gal.* iv. 6. “ God hath sent forth the Spirit of his “ Son into their hearts, crying, Abba Father.” Now this part of the gain of a spiritual merchant consists in a filial boldness before God, a holy freedom and familiarity with God, a steady, humble, unshaken confidence, and a supreme, happy delight in God. All which is attended with

with a sincere and universal aim, and endeavour to please God, which is the very life and essence of real and close walking with God, and this extends to, and is in some degree manifest in the whole of his conduct, in all the various stations, relations and duties of life. This the spiritual merchant will ever esteem a most precious and valuable part of his gain. O that we might all grow rich in this holy fellowship and communion with God.

4. He gains *true comfort, joy, and assurance of heaven*. And this is better than all the fine gold on the earth, his comfort is the comfort of God, and comes from the GOD of all comfort ; his joy of the holy Ghost, and his assurance is founded in and built upon the free, faithful and unchangable love and grace of God, who he knows abideth faithful and neither will, nor can, break his promise, or deny himself. And therefore he is emboldened to say, that, "because Jesus lives he shall live
"also." There are many earthly merchants who have much gold and much fine gold, yet have not a single grain of this comfort or assurance, nor can all their fine gold ever procure it for them. Nay they have no assurance of the enjoyment of the fine gold they have saved and treasured up on earth, many have been awfully and suddenly called away at midnight from it all, as the rich fool in the gospel, *Luke xii. 20.*—or else Solomon's words have been fulfilled in them and "their riches have made unto themselves
"wings and fled away as an eagle towards hea-

“ven,” O how much better is a believers gain than all this !

5. He gains *a glorious victory and triumph over death and hell*, for even here “ he is made more “ than a conqueror, through him that loved him.” And the language and experience of Job and Paul also are his, for by this blessed part of his gain he can join with them in saying, “ I know that my “ Redeemer liveth, and though after my skin, “ worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh I shall “ see God, whom mine eyes shall behold for my- “ self and not for another.—And O death where “ is thy sting, O grave where is thy victory,” &c. Well he knows that God, as the Psalmist says ; “ has redeemed and shall redeem his soul from the “ power of the grave, for he will receive him.” But this no fine gold can give to a poor Christless impenitent sinner though possessed of ever so much of it ; for “ riches profit not in the day of wrath,” and such a day is the day of death to all ungenerate persons. O how have many, who have gained much fine gold in this world trembled even to despair, at the realizing view, and near and felt approach of death, judgment and eternity ; but here, where a wicked man must part with, and loose all his gains, here the happy believer, the spiritual merchant sweetly possesses and comfortably enjoys *all his*. O what a precious part of his gain is this ! surely this is better than fine gold.

6. He gains a *glorious* and *joyful resurrection*, for at that *awful* (but to him) *auspicious morning*, when Christ who is his life shall appear, he shall appear with him in glory, for that which “ was
 “ sown in corruption shall then be raised in incor-
 “ ruption, what was sown in dishonour shall be
 “ raised in glory, what was sown in weakness shall
 “ be raised in power, what was sown a natural
 “ body shall be raised a spiritual body.” O how will his gains begin to shine on that great and glorious day to which no doubt the prophet Malachi alludes when speaking in the name of God concerning his saints, he says—“ and they shall be
 “ mine, saith the Lord, in the day when I make
 “ up my jewels, and I will spare them as a man
 “ spareth his own son that serveth him, then
 “ shall ye return and discern between the righte-
 “ ous and the wicked, between him that serveth
 “ God and him that serveth him not.” But O what a dreadful contrast will then be seen in the wicked however great or rich, for it is said of such, that “ they shall hide themselves in dens and
 “ in the rocks of the mountains, and say to the
 “ mountains and the rocks fall on us and hide us
 “ from the face of him that sitteth upon the
 “ throne and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the
 “ great day of his wrath is come and who shall
 “ be able to stand.” Surely then the gains of the spiritual merchant are in this respect also as the text says, better than fine gold.

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7. He gains *eternal life* and *glory in heaven*; and here he attains to the very summit of his wishes, this is what he has had through grace in his eye in all his spiritual trade and merchandize—this, if I may be allowed so to say, was the fortune and estate he was trading for, and with less than this he never intended to sit down satisfied. With a view to the enjoyment of this, it was, that he was by divine grace so diligent, earnest, zealous, careful, painfull, laborious, and watchfull in his spiritual and heavenly trade. And now when he comes to the enjoyment of this blessed part of his gains, he will never repent of all or any of his holy pains, labor and diligence. Now shall he find the sweet fulfilment of that happy word—“so shall we be for ever with the Lord” Ah says the gracious soul this is gain enough indeed—well, for the comfort of all such who are happily engaged in the heavenly trade, let them reflect upon it. It is said, *Rom. ii. 7.* “To them
 “who by patient continuance in well doing seek
 “for glory, honor, immortality and eternal life.” But not all the fine gold on earth can bring a soul to this; O that the Lord may help poor Christless perishing sinners to consider this, and lay it to heart before they perish for ever. But this brings me to the last particular intended in the discourse which was,

To conclude with a few words of serious address to the real Christian, under the character of a merchant, and also to the Christless sinner, who

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is at present both a stranger and an enemy to this heavenly trade and merchandize.

I. *To the real Christian.*

1. *Be diligent and punctual in the duties of your heavenly trade and merchandize.* O watch and pray against a slothful, careless spirit, *drowsiness will cover a man with rags* in more senses than one. Remember and O attend to the apostles exhortation. "Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, "serving the Lord," if sloth and negligence get the better of thee, depend upon it thou art suffering some sad loss in thy soul. Give diligence (says the apostle) brethren to make your calling and election sure, and "the hand of the diligent" (says solomon) "maketh rich," whatsoever ye do, then do it heartily as unto the Lord and not unto men; let all publick, private, secret duties, be carefully and diligently attended to as you wish to thrive and increase in durable riches and righteousness. Merchants who neglect their publick attendance on the Exchange, soon begin to be suspected. Let this thought put thee in mind of the necessity of a constant and diligent attendance on all the publick ordinances. Merchants who are seldom seen in their counting-houses, or neglect correspondence with their more distant, or conversation with their nearer friends, give great alarm to suspect matters are not right with them. Let this put thee in mind of the necessity and importance

tance of a clear, regular and constant attendance upon private and secret duties.

2. *Look carefully over, and examine frequently into, and post your books.*

And this is quite consistent with the advice given by the apostle Paul, "examine yourselves." When an earthly merchant neglects his books, it is a sure sign things are bad with him, if his books are neglected his trade and profits must decay, and thus will it be with the believer if he continues willfully to neglect the advice here given him. The advice I would explain thus, 1. Search the scriptures seriously, constantly, and diligently, 2. Daily store your memory as your spiritual day-book with somewhat truly good, and endeavour not to blot it by the indulgence of sinful vanities. 3. Labour after and pray for a clear and scripturally established judgment in the things of God, so that you may as the apostle says, "Be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding," this will prove a good method of keeping your spiritual journal. 4. Daily keep your eye and watch over your affections, and this as closely and as carefully as a merchant does his cash-book, that he may see and know what is going out and what is coming in. May the Lord enable us to attend to this book.

5. Do as Paul did in *Acts* xxiv. 16. "Exercise yourself to have a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men." A well posted
 Ledger,

Ledger, and a truly pacified conscience, a clean Ledger and a pure conscience, an open Ledger and a well informed conscience, are no unfit emblems one of the other, and I may venture to say that if our consciences are through grace thus kept, it will be much for our spiritual comfort, peace and profit. 6. Keep up a good circulation of bills and do not fear the negotiating of them at all times with the bank of heaven, they are all good, you will never be a sufferer by this kind of paper currency (if I may be allowed the expression.) I mean the precious promises of God. 7. Neglect not stated and regular correspondence by letter. In other words continue instant in prayer. Let that dear and glorious Lord with whom you trade hear from you in this way, not merely every day but many very many times in the day. 8. Daily ask for a needful supply of running cash, that is, of sensible comforts, but then leave your gracious God to bestow them when and how he sees needful and best for you.

3. Labor to extend and enlarge thy heavenly trade and merchandize as much as ever thou canst, you never need fear having too much of it, many earthly merchants have been obliged to stop, and break, merely because they have over-traded themselves. But not so the heavenly merchant, with such a one it is a sure and sweet maxim, "The more trade the more riches," it is not, it never was, or ever will be a losing trade. It cannot be overdone by too many ingaging in it,

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labor therefore, O believer to extend and enlarge it more and more daily, in a way of knowledge of, love to, and communion with the Lord Jesus Christ, and to this the people of God are exhorted in his word by the apostle, *Rom. xv. 13.* “ that ye may abound in hope by the power of “ the holy ghost.” *2 Cor. viii. 7.* “ therefore as “ ye abound in every thing—abound in this grace “ also—*1 Thes. iv. 1.*” where the apostle exhorts the people of God that “ as they had received “ of him how they ought to walk and to please “ God, so they would abound more and more” so also, *Phil. i. 9.* “ That your love may abound “ yet more and more.” So *1 Thes. iv. 10.* “ but “ we beseech you brethren that ye increase more “ and more.” O then labor to extend thy spiritual trade and do not fear having too much of it.

4. Let no tryals, losses or difficulties, which thou mayest meet with discourage thee, ever remember that whatever thou mayest be called to loose for Christ, yet most assuredly thou shalt be no looser by Christ. Yea thou art told in the word of truth, that whatsoever thou loosest in this world for Christ, is insured for thee in a better world by Christ, who will assuredly repay thee and with good interest also. Ye have his own blessed word for it, *Matt. xix. 29.* “ And “ every one that has forsaken houses or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or “ wife, or children, or lands, for my names “ sake, shall receive an hundred fold, and shall

“inherit everlasting life.” Yea, when it has gone farther than all this, when some of the spiritual merchants have been called to lay down their very lives for the Lord Jesus and the Gospel’s sake; yet even here they have been no losers, and this also he has assured them of in his word, *Mark* viii. 35. “But whosoever shall loose his life for my sake and the gospel’s, the same shall save it.” Go on, fear not to maintain thy heavenly trade, thou most assuredly shall be an eternal gainer at last.

5. Rejoice in the hope, prospect, and sweet assurance of enjoying all thy gain at last in an eternal world, and in an eternal weight of glory. For this thou most assuredly shalt do at last; there is, O believer, a mansion prepared and a hope laid up for thee in heaven, where thou, when thou hast served God and thy generation by his will, shalt certainly arrive, then will you sing with sweet Dr. Watts, where he says,

O glorious hour, O blest abode,
I shall be near and like my God,
And flesh and sin no more controul;
The sacred pleasures of my soul.

And elsewhere,

Then shall I see, and hear, and know,
All I desir’d or wish’d below,
And every hour find sweet employ,
In that eternal world of joy.

Now they desire, and then they shall possess and enjoy the better country, the heavenly; of this hope and prospect they need not to be ashamed, for the God of their hope is not ashamed to be called their God, *for he has provided for them a city.* O happy trade! O sweet, blessed and eternal gain! O believer may thy soul be much instructed and established in this blessed trade.

II. *To the Christless sinner.*

1. Think, O think seriously, what a miserable, what a wretched, what a losing, what a soul-destroying trade thou art at present engaged in. All the pleasure and profit thou art seeking is in sin, and this is every day at the peril and danger, and except rich grace prevent, must and will be at last attended with the awful, the irreparable loss of thy poor soul. O how much have you poor Christless sinners (many of you at least) it is to be feared lost already by the dreadful trade you have been carrying on all your lives long. O how much of your precious time is lost, and lost irrecoverably too! How many of your natural talents lost, buried, abused, or vilely prostituted to, and in the service and drudgery of sin and Satan; how many precious opportunities, and seasons, and means of grace lost. And may it not be said of thee, and may I not now say to thee, O poor sinner, that all thou hast gotten in thy trade and dealing with sin and Satan is, “*thou hast destroyed thyself.*” In no respect

respect art thou wiser or really better for all thou hast been doing, or in thy dreadful trade getting all thy life. O may it be set home to thy awakening and conversion.

2. Let me entreat you to consider (though you profit ever so much by your earthly trade and business) that awful and awakening word spoken by our dear Lord, which is directed to prosperous worldlings, who are strangers and enemies to this heavenly trade and merchandize, *Matt.* xvi. 26. "What is a man profited if he "gain the whole world, and loose his own soul." Ah poor souls let me intreat you to consider what will all your earthly wealth and riches do for you in a dying hour, and that hour, (however the thought of it sometimes makes thee tremble) must and will come, and then where and what wilt thou be? Riches as Solomon says, profit not in the day of wrath; and such a day is the day of death to Christless impenitent sinners. When our dear Lord, in *Luke* xii. 20. calls the poor sensual worldling a *fool*, he immediately adds, "so is every one who layeth up for himself treasure upon earth, and is "not rich towards God," the prophet Jeremiah in speaking, says, "he shall leave them in the "midst of his days, and at the end shall be a "fool." O sirs, the unfearchable and inexhaustible riches of Christ are the one thing needful to make poor sinners rich, and miserable sinners happy,

happy, may the Lord help you to consider this, to your souls eternal welfare and salvation.

3. Seriously reflect, how much of thy precious time is lost and irrecoverably gone from thee for ever. And O how uncertain is the period of thy existence here. O that the Lord the Spirit may savingly convince thee of thy sin and folly, in having thus abused and mispent it; and by his grace mayest thou be helped to enter upon the profession and practice of heavenly merchandize. If every moment of thy past time, poor sinner! had a voice, and they were all now to speak to thee, and of thee, not one of them could bear witness of any thing thou knowest of, or hast ever done, in this spiritual and heavenly trade and merchandize, nor could they all assure thee of one single moment more to be granted to thee. Indeed if a consideration of these things is by the power and grace of the Spirit of God set home to thy soul, thou wilt take the alarm, see thy danger, and mourn and tremble, and be happily brought to experience something of the truth, beauty, glory and reality of this holy, heavenly, and truly profitable trade which I have been endeavouring to set before thee and recommended to thee. O that the Lord may bless it to this end.

4. Remember what a dismal and dreadful account must and will be brought against you at the great and awful day of judgment, if you live and

and die in your present Christless impenitent state. That day will be to you a dreadful but a just and an eternal balancing of your accounts before God the judge of all. And O poor sinner ! remember that on that day as the prophet Daniel expresses it, “ The judgment “ will be set and the books will be opened.” And O, however the books of thy soul have been neglected, and are all confusion and darkness ; God’s books are not so, his are rightly and well kept, as will (except grace prevent) dreadfully appear to thee, and against thee, on that awful day ; there will be two especially dreadful books open against thee in that day, viz. the book of God’s holy, just, and righteous judgments, and the book of thy guilty and self-condemning conscience. Nay, the book of life itself will be dreadful to thee, as thou wilt have no part nor lot in that matter. O that the consideration of these things may be blessed to thy soul for thy awakening and conversion.

5. Remember it is not *too late*, thou art yet on mercy’s ground, once more under mercy’s joyful sound, and within mercy’s mighty reach. O may the Lord own and bless the things here mentioned for thy consideration, and may he by his holy Spirit quicken thy poor dead soul, and help and enable thee now to begin this blessed and heavenly trade, so that at the last thou mayest through grace give up thy account with joy, and not with grief and shame. Remember for thy
encouragement,

encouragement, that many poor souls have in consequence of being called and renewed by the grace of God, (in this blessed and heavenly trade) gained much in a little time; yea, gained heaven and eternal glory. O mayest thou through that grace be enabled to go and do likewise.

And now brethren I conclude by commending you to God and the word of his grace, may he own and bless these few broken hints which have been dropped among you, to your internal and eternal benefit. I add no more, but pray the Lord may command his blessing. Amen and Amen.

F I N I S.



